

VZCZCXRO3365

PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDU RUEHKUK RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHROV RUEHTRO
DE RUEHKH #1458/01 2721411
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 281411Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1994
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001458

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, SE WILLIAMSON, AF/C,
NSC FOR BPITTMAN AND CHUDSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/27/2018

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL UN AU SU

SUBJECT: DARFUR'S PROLIFERATING PEACE PROPOSALS - FORM IN
SEARCH OF SUBSTANCE

REF: A. KHARTOUM 1433
1B. KHARTOUM 1426

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Since the ICC crisis broke, the number of peace proposals and initiatives for solving Darfur have increased as the regime searches for a way out at minimal cost to itself. Observers and participants say that these proposals are long on rhetoric and, so far, short on substance. The likeliest scenario sees a conflation of various initiatives into the one championed by the Khartoum regime, the "Sudan People's Initiative," leading to a possible conference hosted by the Emir of Qatar, according to the Sudanese. End summary.

SMOKE BUT NO FIRE - YET

¶2. (C) The July 14 announcement by ICC prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo of a possible indictment of President Al-Bashir has lit a fire under the regime and its friends to find a workable initiative that can bring some sort of improvement on the ground in Darfur, preserve the regime's control, and be sold to the UNSC as a reason for Article 16 postponement of an Al-Bashir arrest warrant. Depending on one's definition, there are (very loosely defined) about four initiatives:

-- The "Sudan People's" (Ahl al-Sudan) Initiative, championed by the regime (reftel A).

-- The Darfur First Initiative of Umma Party head and former PM Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi.

-- An Arab League Initiative (coordinated with the AU).

-- A Qatari Initiative (or Qatar's leadership of the Arab league Initiative).

-- Various Darfuri civil society initiatives and brain-storming tied to recent Darfuri meetings in Dar es Salaam, Heidelberg, Cambridge, and a possible October meeting in London.

¶3. (C) The initiatives that have gotten the most attention and ink, the first four, seem to be short on substance while, not surprisingly, the various Darfuri civil society groups - who know their society and care more about it - are most focused on ideas that could actually improve the situation on the ground rather than ideas that could provide Al-Bashir with an exit strategy from ICC persecution. Arab League Ambassador Halima and Qatari Ambassador Ali Bin Hassan Al-Hamadeh admitted to CDA Fernandez in separate meetings

that their initiatives are deeply influenced by ideas provided by the National Congress Party (NCP) of President Al-Bashir. The Qatari seemed to be especially eager to support the NCP, dismissive of Darfuris and their concerns, and naive about the challenges of Darfur. Al-Hamadeh admitted that the Qataris were hoping to get some ideas from UN/AU Mediator Djibrile Bassole, in addition to the NCP.

REGIME INSIDERS DISMAYED BY EMPTY SHELL

¶4. (C) Khartoum University Sociology Professor Musa Adam Abdul Jalil, a native Darfuri active in civil society circles, described the much ballyhooed "Ahl al-Sudan" Initiative as "so far a title only" with no substance aside from "getting a large group of people in a room in Doha" and hoping they come up with something. Abdul Jalil described a regime that is still undecided about what to do and would prefer to do as little as possible, focusing on process without results in order to buy more time. He had just talked to Al-Tayyib Mukhtar, a former police general and ex-Darfur governor, who had been invited to the Presidential Palace to talk about the initiative with NCP officials. Al-Mukhtar was reportedly depressed when he saw how little there was to the initiative so far. Presidential Advisor Abdallah Masar, a Darfuri Arab with ties to the janjaweed, admitted to CDA on September 24 that "there really isn't an initiative as such yet. Just many ideas without much direction."

¶5. (C) Professor Abdul Jalil noted that if the regime was truly sincere about changing things in Darfur (rather than

KHARTOUM 00001458 002 OF 002

sincere in wanting to save Al-Bashir's neck) it could have rolled something out during Al-Bashir's August 2008 tour of Darfur's capitals. This could have included a formal apology and a substantive announcement on compensation with three elements: acceptance of personal compensation, announcing a commission, with transparent leadership, to implement it, and a tangible figure. It could also have announced that Darfur is henceforth one administrative unit with greater autonomy divided into three or more states as a concession. Both Abdul Jalil and Darfuri Arab tribal activist Walid Madibo saw the role of civil society as "unifying our efforts" so that they can provide real suggestions to the other hapless players - Arab League, GOS, Bassole - when the time is right.

ARAB REGIMES TO THE RESCUE

¶6. (C) Both activists feared that the regime would seek to (and succeed) in combining the "Ahl al-Sudan" initiative with the Qatari/Arab League effort, "this would be a big mistake." Such a step would be the death knell of any possible credibility the Arab League or Qataris can hope to have with the people of Darfur. The professor noted that "the Arab League never saw the people of Darfur as human beings, but only through the eyes of the regime, as problems to be covered up as quickly and as cheaply as possible."

¶7. (C) Meanwhile, Al-Mahdi's "Darfur First" initiative so far consists of an effort to revive the group which created the Regional Rule Act of 1980 and vague outreach to Bassole with some truly hackneyed suggestions such as "communicating with all stakeholders and parties to enhance nationalism and feelings of belongingness to Darfur and Sudan" and "institutionalizing peace culture in Darfur and Sudan," and "resuming social peace initiatives and encouraging Darfurians to engage in Darfur-Darfur dialogue." It seems abundantly clear that the Darfur First Initiative is all about getting Al-Mahdi back in the limelight. Observers recall that in 2005, the regime carried out 45 reconciliation conferences, produced papers, photos, falsified attendance and signatures, all to present an illusory image of "progress in Darfur" and fear that the same thing will happen this time.

¶ 8. (C) Despite the frustration, there is some heartening movement on the ground. Abdul Jalil described spontaneous efforts at reconciliation in Darfur. In his own Fur area of Fata Borno, west of Kutum, Arab tribesmen are seeking to reach out to African IDPs. While in the past, the IDPs couldn't venture outside their camp, the Arabs have removed their herds from some farmland and encourage the IDPs to resume their past lives. "They see you walking and give you a ride in their regime-provided landcruisers. They then offer apologies: we are sorry for what happened in the past. The devil made us do it." Abdul Jalil noted that such local efforts are fragile, "they collapse when the regime formally takes them over."

¶ 9. (C) Comment: The fact that so many are now talking about concrete ways to bring peace and reconciliation to Darfur is a plus but the reality is that, so far, there is a lot of rhetoric and very little substance. The regime and the Arab League have little credibility, the Qataris are seen as naive and ill-informed. Those that have the most realistic and credible ideas, independent Darfuris, are just the ones least likely to get a hearing. There also seems to be little agreement within the NCP to date as to how to proceed except for enhancing (for now) cooperation with UNAMID and having a big meeting somewhere, perhaps in Doha. Those are not necessarily bad things but a substantive shift in the dire situation in Darfur will require rather more substance and detail by the regime and its friends up front, especially in regards to economic, security and political issues. One reason for the hesitation is that some in the regime fear that whatever they do won't be enough to sway the UNSC while others still hope for a military solution to the problem, either in Chad or in Darfur. Others see a more Machiavellian reason for NCP intransigence, seeing in the NCP's divide and rule tactics a conscious policy of preventing Darfuris from uniting against the regime, either politically or militarily. This belief is reinforced whenever the regime acts quickly to prevent Arab leaders (such as warlords Musa Hilal and Hameti) from meeting with Fur leaders or with the SPLM. End comment.

FERNANDEZ